

Opening Statement of the Honorable Fred Upton
Subcommittee on Health
Hearing on “Telehealth to Digital Medicine: How 21st Century Technology Can Benefit Patients”
May 1, 2014

We are here today to explore the opportunities 21st century technology presents to improve the lives of patients and advance our health care system.

The introduction of digital forms of communication and applications, such as wireless technologies and smart phones, hold great promise for the future of our health care system. 21st century technologies can allow providers to monitor patients released from an inpatient hospital and help reduce the chances of relapse and re-admittance. They also can support new delivery reforms and models that were part of the focus of SGR reform legislation authored by Dr. Burgess, help improve access for those in rural areas, and reduce the overall invasiveness and risks related to health care procedures and illnesses.

I want to commend Chairman Pitts and Ranking Member Pallone for their collaboration on today's hearing. As they just discussed, they will be soliciting ideas for how technology can be incorporated into our health care system to improve the cost, quality, and delivery of health care in this country.

In support of that effort, there are a number of questions that need to be answered: Which technologies hold promise for improving the quality and delivery of health care in this country? What role, if any, exists for the federal government in supporting such technologies? How can Congress help foster and realize the promise of 21st century technologies to improve the lives of Americans?

This will be a priority of the Committee on Energy and Commerce over the next few years as we work towards fostering innovation that will lead to more treatments and cures for issues related to personal illness and the overall delivery of health care. The topics discussed today will certainly be a vital part of the 21st Century Cures initiative that was unveiled yesterday.

I also would like to recognize the efforts of committee members Gregg Harper, Bill Johnson, Doris Matsui, and Peter Welch who have helped author legislation that in part made today's hearing possible.

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